

Our Ref: E5/AM/ynl

11th March 2016

Independent Press Standards Organisation
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LONDON
EC4M 7LG



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Isle of Wight County Press Annual Statement to IPSO

Overview of Regulated Entity

The Isle of Wight County Press is a locally owned, totally independent weekly newspaper for the Isle of Wight. It currently sells around 29,000 copies per week. It has a main website iwcp.co.uk, which regularly has more than 200,000 unique users and 3 million-plus page impressions per month.

Apart from an annual Holiday News tourist publication, and various in-paper supplements, this is our sole publication.

The Isle of Wight is an English county with its own unitary authority. It has a population of around 144,000.

I, Alan Marriott, editor, am the newspaper's responsible person, with Rachael Rosewell, my deputy, as back up.

Our editorial standards

The County Press adheres to the editor's code of conduct and does its level best to ensure everything published is fair and accurate. As a news team living in a hot-house environment of an island community, we certainly hear about it if we get something wrong.

We deal with all minor and in-house complaints in a responsible manner, with all but the simplest spelling error being referred to editor or deputy.

More serious complaints are dealt with in a more composed fashion, with evidence from reporter and complainant being weighed. We are not afraid to admit our errors, and to put them right in a measured way.

Cont/...

ADVERTISING
01983 526741
FAX: 01983 527204

EDITORIAL
01983 522210
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For instance, we have a For the Record column, for simple corrections and clarifications, which is always on page four.

But, if we have made an error in something such as a wedding report, we are likely to, in addition, send the couple several copies of the corrected report, and sometimes re-run the report in full.

In the rare instances we cannot come to an agreement with the complainant, we will always give them IPSO's details for them to make a formal complaint.

Our highly experienced team of sub-editors, news editors and section editors query stories all the time, with the reporters given a clear brief that they should not just go on one person's word for a claim of wrong doing etc. Again the benefit of working and living in our patch for a long time brings a real "nose" for what can be trusted or not.

I have not had cause to seek guidance from IPSO in the first year, but regularly speak to the editorial law team at the NMA, who provide not only legal, but ethical guidance.

Complaints-handling procedure

Our complaints handling procedure is largely informal at the first point of contact. Being a very local organisation, with an office in the centre of Newport, the county town, people often come in to comment or complain. We take complaints via the phone and there is a contact us button on our website, which often elicits comments.

I also have to reply to complaints from people posting comments about stories on our website, but this is often refereeing disputes between commenters.

We do have a complaints form (attached), which I have not had to use yet as our normal systems seem to do the job well enough.

As previously stated, complaints are dealt with at a senior level and reporters are not encouraged to try to resolve them themselves. I feel that a senior voice is a calming influence on situations, and can be seen as more objective.

If we feel a minor complaint is justified, we will usually offer a simple correction or clarification in our For the Record column. A more major error will probably result in a follow-up story to rectify things, or in the most serious of cases, a correction and apology in a prominent position in the paper. Thankfully these are very rare.

Cont/...

We provide readers with information about how to lodge a complaint, and about our membership of IPSO, on page 2 of our paper each week (attached). This has also recently been added to the Contact Us section on our website.

We have just issued guidance to editorial staff about how to deal with a complaint, using the guidelines set out here. They are also issued with IPSO contact details and a complaint form

Training procedures

Although no formal complaints training is given, all new recruits are told at their induction how to deal with complaints ie pass them to a senior member of the team.

Record on compliance

The County Press was referred to IPSO on two occasions during 2015.

1. [REDACTED] (IPSO ref. 08626-15)

This was a complaint made by [REDACTED] who claimed our columnist Charlotte Hofton had imputed that [REDACTED] had changed his name to "better advance his business interests". The commission found there was no breach of Section 1 of the code (accuracy) as he had claimed.


2. Carole Dennett (IPSO ref. 04973-15)

This was a wide-ranging complaint made by Ms Dennett, alleging breaches of Sections 1, 3 and 4 of the Code, in a series of articles published between April and July 2015. These included news stories, comment pieces by Charlotte Hofton and an editorial by Alan Marriott, editor.

IPSO found the County Press had not breached any of the code sections in any of the articles. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

As far as I am aware these are the only two referrals during 2015.

Yours sincerely,



Alan Marriott
Editor, IW County Press
Enc.

Isle of Wight County Press

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Alan Marriott
TO: All Editorial Staff
DATE: 8th March 2016

Complaints Procedure

In the light of guidance from the Independent Press Standards Organisation, I am issuing you all with guidance of how to deal with press complaints.

Please read these notes and retain a copy. A lot of how you deal with such matters is commonsense, but for clarity here is what you should do:

1. Most complaints, unless they are spelling errors etc, should be referred to the news editor, deputy news editor, deputy editor or myself. I do not encourage reporters to get into arguments with members of the public, particularly when the matter is contentious.
2. Make a clear note of what the complaint is, when it was made and who by. Take clear contact details. Please pass these notes to the senior person dealing with it.

For senior members of the team dealing with complaints

3. Be polite and clear with the complainant as to what you intend to do about it and let them know someone will call them back.
4. Those dealing with the complaint should assess both sides. If there is clear wrongdoing by the County Press then try to come to some agreement about a correction
5. If in any doubt refer the matter to the editor.
6. If asked for IPSO contact details please be ready to give them out. They are: Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London EC4M 7LG. complaints@ipso.co.uk Tel: 0300 123 2220
7. Attached is a complaints form which you may find useful to have to hand.

Isle of Wight County Press complaints procedure

At the County Press, we try very hard to get things right every week. If we do not, we want to hear about what you think we have got wrong, or you are not happy with.

If we feel you have a point we will try and make amends at the first possible opportunity. We will do our best to deal with the complaint within seven working days.

A senior editor from the department will deal with your complaint and speak to you to resolve it.

This form enables you to make a complaint and tells you how we will deal with it.

If you are not satisfied, you can report us to the Independent Press Standards Organisation, Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London EC4M 7LG

E-mail: inquiries@ipso.co.uk. Phone number: 0300 123 2220.



Name

Address.....

Phone number and e-mail address

Nature of complaint, and which CP employee dealt with your initial contact. (we are happy to help you complete this section).....

CP employee you spoke to when making complaint.....

Should you have any queries about how to make a complaint, please contact the editorial department on 01983 522210.